



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

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PSC Staff Releases AmerenUE Storm Outage & Service Restoration Report *Report recommends AmerenUE clear vegetation along power lines*

JEFFERSON CITY---The staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission says that AmerenUE should enhance its tree-trimming programs to provide for greater removal of large limbs and trees near its power lines. This is one of several recommendations made in a PSC Staff report on storm preparation and restoration efforts that followed severe thunderstorms in St. Louis and eastern Missouri on July 19 and July 21, 2006. "Staff carefully reviewed a number of outage metrics and has concluded that more aggressive programs for clearing vegetation from feeders and sub-transmission lines should be implemented by AmerenUE if damage from future storms is to be reduced," the report said.

"PSC investigators found that AmerenUE needs to remove substantial amounts of vegetation along power lines throughout its system," said Jeff Davis, Chairman of the Missouri PSC. "That includes side clearances and overhangs, along feeders and sub-transmission systems. In addition, the report recommends that AmerenUE target removal of problem trees within the utility's easement," Davis said.

Staff has also recommended that AmerenUE communicate with landowners who have trees off the right-of-way that represent a significant risk to sub-transmission and feeder lines, to find a reasonable means to reduce the outage risk from these trees.

Staff warns however, that even if all the trees in AmerenUE's service territory were trimmed per current procedures immediately before these storms hit the St. Louis area, much of the damage observed following these storms would have still occurred. Many of the trees and large limbs that damaged AmerenUE's facilities would not be removed by AmerenUE's current tree trimming procedures or are off of AmerenUE's right-of-way.

The report also recommends the Commission open three rulemaking proceedings to develop rules for all electric utilities in the state under PSC jurisdiction. Those rules would address annual reporting on tree-trimming; infrastructure maintenance and inspection, including utility pole inspections; and system reliability which would address the frequency and duration of customer outages. The proposed rules would require reporting on the programs as well as their funding levels.

(more)

The PSC Staff report notes that AmerenUE activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) promptly as storms on July 19, 2006 were impacting the St. Louis area. Shortly after activating its EOC, AmerenUE started to seek assistance through its Mutual Assistance Agreements.

“Staff reviewed AmerenUE’s restoration planning process, and based on comparisons with restoration practices literature from several sources, concluded that AmerenUE’s planning process was well developed. Staff also concluded, based on comparisons with other storm restoration efforts around the country, that AmerenUE’s restoration effort was well executed. This does not mean that Staff did not find areas where it has recommendations for improvement,” the report said.

Some of those recommendations include AmerenUE:

- ✓ Continuing to enhance its safety programs to identify and make downed lines safe after a major outage event;
- ✓ Continuing discussions with AT&T regarding notification whenever call gapping is to be implemented on switches that affect the providing of critical AmerenUE services;
- ✓ Promoting customer registration on its website to ensure that customers can access customer-specific information on service restoration in the event of a storm related outage; and
- ✓ Continuing efforts to improve participation in the Storm Schools it offers for the media, fire, police, city and county officials.

The report also recommends that Missouri-American Water Company assess additional methods to get information to customers regarding boil orders, if any, during major outages when customers do not have access to their normal media outlets to get that information.

Staff also recommends that a roundtable with all electric utilities be held to discuss best practices in storm restoration planning and execution.

Severe thunderstorms hit St. Louis and eastern Missouri on July 19, 2006 and again on July 21, 2006. Hundreds of thousands of customers lost electric service due to those storms which carried very high winds.

The report can be viewed on the PSC website: www.psc.mo.gov